DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 385 455 SO 024 838

AUTHOR Hoge, John D.
TITLE A Retrospective on the Social Studies: The Year is 2015.
PUB DATE Nov 94
NOTE 6p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies (Phoenix, AZ, November 20, 1994).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Change; *Educational Change; Educational Improvement; Educational Innovation; Elementary Secondary Education; *Futures (of Society); *Long Range Planning; Organizational Change; *Prediction; Public Policy; Social Change; *Social Studies; Standards; State Standards; Trend Analysis

ABSTRACT

This essay, set in the future, reflects on the national accomplishments in social studies of the past 20 years. Among the educational highlights noted include: (1) the implementation of national standards assessments with results showing that curriculum reform worked; (2) the successful change of social studies courses to an issues-focused orientation away from the traditional single-subject approach; (3) emphasis on higher order thinking and multidisciplinary-integrated instruction; and (4) instruction that emphasized reflective inquiry and student decision-making. In that future time some problems that remain will include drug abuse, child abuse, and credit abuse. Recommendations focus on the need to: (1) improve the flexibility and validity of the national standards tests; (2) improve the use of service-learning opportunities that grow naturally from issues-focused social studies instruction; (3) increase contact with social science scholars and their research; and (4) more clearly light the path to leadership for all who wish to participate to improve society. Contains nine references. (EH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 385 455

A RETROSPECTIVE ON THE SOCIAL STUDIES:

THE YEAR IS 2015

BY

JOHN D. HOGE

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

SO 024 238

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

John D. Hoge

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A Retrospective on the Social Studies: The Year is 2015

What have we accomplished?

Today, in 2015, I think we can look back and accurately assess the forces and turning points that have brought us to this present pinnacle of interest and professional practice in our field. We have achieved many of the goals set out by the scholars who conceptualized the social studies and "new" social studies. The ideas developed in these two waves of intellectual creativity took decades to perfect. Efforts by many of the people who sat in this same forum 20, 30, 40, and even 50 years ago nurtured the social studies with high quality curriculum products, research, theories, college courses, and countless hours of classroom instruction. It is to them we owe our gratitude for making social studies the substantial and publicly-respected core of our present-day curriculum. It would be easy to discuss an almost endless succession of events that have brought us to where we are today, but I'm going to restrict my remarks to a few selected events that took place in the 1990s, and the first fifteen years of the new millennium.

Two events of the 1990s hold particular significance for advancing the social studies to where it is today. One is the widely analyzed citizenship crisis that rose to public consciousness shortly after the Republicans won a majority of the seats in the Senate and House of Representatives during the 1994 congressional election. An all-to-easily-manipulated-and-often-deceived public, enraged by partisan politics and continuing gridlock, demanded and received a number of changes designed to return the political process--and government--back to a semblance of what our founders had envisioned. The legislation, that we now recall as the Gingrich-Gephart Compromise, reduced the influence of big money interests through significant and lasting campaign finance reform and, equally significant, authorized a program of political education for voters that we still benefit from today. Elements of the education initiative included a vast expansion of C-SPAN coverage and free, unlimited access to Internet databases on legislation, congressional investigations, and many other sources of government information through what we now call C-NET. Most significant, however, was the portion of the Gingrich-Gephart Compromise that mandated elementary, secondary and post-secondary education designed to help the

public analyze complex social and political issues using C-SPAN, C-NET, and other commercial resources.

This singular legislative event, some of you may recall, coincided with the official release of the 1994 NCSS curriculum standards for social studies, and the publication of elaborated standards for history, geography, civics, and economics. These combined standards fueled a stunning revival of interest in social studies. New curriculum materials arrived on our desktops almost daily. Schools were calling for help with in-service programs. Attendance at state and regional conferences skyrocketed.

The year 2001 ushered in the first round of comprehensive national standards testing in all areas of the social studies. Results were mixed, but comparison studies done against earlier assessments showed that we had made significant gains. Publishers rushed to correlate their materials with the new national standards assessments. Schools pushed to include enough instruction to guarantee a decent showing on the tests.

In 2002 OERI funded the multi-faceted Social Studies Citizenship Assessment that sought to determine the effectiveness of different curriculum patterns and products. The national standards tests were used as only one measure of curriculum effectiveness. The second--and arguably most significant to my mind--was the well-regarded Test Of Political Astuteness/Stupidity (TOPAS) that required an analysis of political and social issues presented in a campaign-like format using simulated news coverage and the information analysis tools of C-NET. The results, I'm sure you all know, convincingly showed that schools that implemented issues-focused social studies courses did far better than those that stuck to traditional single-subject approaches or those that attempted to teach the content of history, geography, government, and economics without a consideration of the controversies and issues that swirl through society. That was a big victory for many of the most desirable features we had all fought for: an emphasis on higher order thinking; the inclusion of instruction that was focused on the core values of our democratic society; multidisciplinary-integrated instruction; and instruction that emphasized reflective inquiry and student decision-making. Much of the last fifteen years was spent consolidating and replicating these significant gains.

Today, in 2015, I believe we are beginning to harvest the results of the good seeds planted back in 1994. Violent crime is down to levels that are

consistent with other advanced democracies. Taxes are down and the tax dollars we do pay are providing services instead of going for interest on the national debt. Voter participation is higher than ever. Even our efforts to combat racial, religious, and ethnic hatred seem to be working. Citizens universally recognize that it is they who are in charge and most miraculously of all, they are accepting this responsibility with a level of maturity and altruistic allegiance that would have brought tears to the eyes of any early American patriot.

What have we failed to accomplish?

With the exception of the nearly complete elimination of smoking, we have failed to curb our national drug habit. The recreational use of drugs by young and old, rich and poor, continues unabated despite the fact that we know of its negative effects on individuals, our own society, and societies half-way round the world. This strand of our issues-focused social studies curriculum appears to be ineffective.

Despite legal acceptance of all forms of adult sexuality, including the nation-wide legalization of prostitution, we have failed to eliminate child molestation and sexual abuse. In fact, these crimes are growing in frequency.

We have failed to curb the use of poor personal and family budgeting habits. Credit abuse is still a significant problem for many people despite our most strenuous efforts in economic education.

Recommendations: What do we (still) need to do?

- Improve the flexibility and validity of the national standards tests.
- Improve the use of service-learning opportunities that grow naturally from issues-focused social studies instruction. It seems especially important to redouble our efforts place youth in service learning opportunities associated with drug, child, and credit abuse.
- Increase contact with social science scholars and their research.
- More clearly light the path to leadership, making certain it is completely unobstructed for all who wish to use their talents to improve our society.

References

Keenow, C. (1992). Electronic social studies: Teaching with technology--update. *Instructor*, 102, (3): 65-66.

Kongshem, L. (1994). Complete guide to the internet. *Executive Educator*, 15 (4): 55-70.

Vockell, E. & Brown, W. (1992). The computer in the social studies curriculum. New York: Mitchell McGraw-Hill.

White, C. (1991). Technology and social studies education: Potentials and a prognosis. *NASSP Bulletin*, 75 (531): 33-41.

_____ . (1994). Geography for life. National geography standards, 1994. Washington, DC: National Geographic Society.

_____ . (1994). National standards for civics and government. Calabasas, CA: Center for Civic Education.

_____ . (1994). National standards for history for grades K-4. Expanding children's world in time and space. Expanded edition including examples of student achievement for grades K-2 and 3-4. Los Angeles: National Center for History in the Schools.

_____ . (1994). National standards for United States history. Exploring the American experience. Grades 5-12. Expanded edition including examples of student achievement. Los Angeles: National Center for History in the Schools.

_____. (1994). Expectations of excellence: Curriculum standards for social studies. Washington, DC: National Council for the Social Studies.